



IMPACTinACTION

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WASH and NTD Collaborations that Work

WASH and NTDs action for social justice in Nepal

Communities lacking essential water, sanitation and health services bear the highest risk of high-morbidity and potentially disabling neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). These diseases also perpetuate poor health and economic deprivation. In Nepal, the 3-year integrated WASH and NTDs project Jagruti ('awakening' in Sanskrit), was designed to drive evidence-based action by government and communities to end transmission of and prevent morbidity and disability from endemic NTDs. The project focused on 14 Wards in two NTD-endemic provinces in eastern Nepal, covering an at-risk population of 80,866 in 14,602 households.

Inclusive WASH – a transformational approach

A team of 31 women Community Resource Persons (CRPs) was trained to address NTDs prevention and treatment, and to utilise a smartphone application (COMPREHENSIV™) to undertake WASH and NTDs data collection and health promotion using short, animated videos. This enabled collecting geotagged, photographic household level WASH and NTD data of every household in the 14 Wards, which was then used by the CRPs and Aama Samuha (women's groups in Nepal that raise awareness about social and health issues affecting women) to identify three priority issues for advocacy – the lack of safe drinking water, drainage systems and toilets, in the most in-need areas of their Wards.

The CRPs and 36 Aama Samuha leaders were trained in evidence-based advocacy, and subsequently, presented the data and issues to the municipal health, water and sanitation departments, local Ward Water & Sanitation Committees, and the municipality chairpersons and vice chairpersons through regular meetings and petitions. Additionally, to effectively engage decision makers, the project used a unique method of 'Mirror Visits' – figuratively holding up a mirror for the authorities to 'see' the WASH situation in



Women meeting with duty bearers of Ward. 6 on the issue of no drinking water.

Credit: Jagruti Nepal project team

their municipalities. They brought officials to various locations to see the actual situation for themselves, resulting in quicker action and commitments by the leaders. For example, within two weeks of one 'Mirror Visit', two tube wells were installed, benefitting 40 Dalit households with no previous access to safe water. Additional pressure has been placed on municipalities to allocate budgets for toilets and drinking water due to greater availability of authentic data. The women also influenced their own communities to construct toilets and practice hygienic behaviours

Agents of change

By the end of its second year, the project achieved impressive results. Household access to safe drinking water increased from ~40% to ~90% (including over 30 hand pumps and bore wells installed in Dalit communities), and the number of households using a handwashing

facility with soap and water increased from 65% to 90%. Likewise, households with toilets increased from 65% to 88%, the vast majority of which reported 100% toilet usage. Further improvements have been made to roads and drainage.

These results demonstrate the impact of leveraging the social power of trained women as agents of change in their own homes and communities, and as advocates for essential WASH services with their local government authorities. Empowering vulnerable communities and engaging women as key change agents will have a sustained impact beyond the project period. Additionally, leveraging government programmes while highlighting gaps in service provision using reliable data, and enabling continuous positive engagement with authorities to respond to the needs of marginalized communities seems to be working.

"Impact in Action" is a series showcasing successful collaborations between WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) initiatives and Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) programmes. Curated by the NNN WASH Working Group in partnership with WHO, this series brings together insightful case studies from around the globe. Each story highlights innovative strategies and tangible outcomes resulting from integrating WASH practices with NTD control and elimination efforts.

[View more case studies](#) and download [WASH and health working together: a 'how-to' guide for neglected tropical disease programmes, second edition.](#)



Home connected to covered drainage system (above); drainage under construction (right).

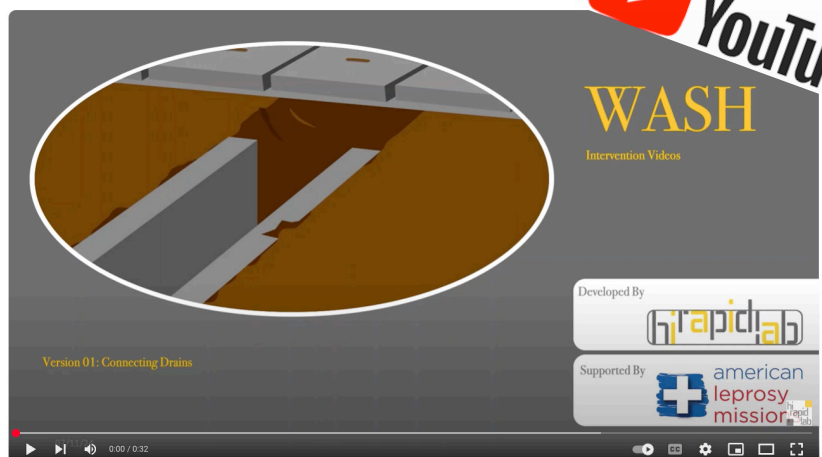
These photos showcase the power of women-led advocacy and data-driven action in improving water, sanitation, and hygiene. Through collaboration and persistent engagement, communities are transforming their environments and securing lasting health and livelihood gains. *All photo credits, this page: Jagruti Nepal project team.*



Before: stagnant water, no drainage on road.



WASH and NTDs guide for Community Resource Persons (CRPs).



Intervention Videos - For Home Care: Connecting Drains

Key lessons

- Restricted government budget for WASH is a major challenge to increasing access for the most marginalized Dalit communities. For political reasons, districts have been declared open defecation free (ODF), when in fact they are not, and obtaining funds for toilets after ODF declaration is difficult. While local authorities are supportive, influencing WASH budget allocations is necessary at all levels.
- Toilets for the landless continues to be a problem, and community toilets are not an accepted or sustainable option. This leaves around 2,000 Dalit households without toilets.
- Patience and perseverance are required for WASH behaviour change, especially among the poorest communities with no or minimum access to WASH facilities.
- Action that will benefit people can only happen when those most impacted by the problem use their data at the point of impact and identify challenges. This can lead to local solutions.
- Advocacy is a tool to bring government services to the people. Raising the issues with the authorities in the right way, with evidence, is effective. The project serves as a bridge to bring the voices of the marginalized to relevant government bodies.

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Five Point Health short video series by HI Rapid Lab covering a variety of topics in health care, including WASH. Click the image or [here](#) to watch.